

Child Outreach Webinar FAQs

On April 22, approved provider program staff and administrators had the opportunity to attend a Webinar, "Reaching Children Impacted by Incarceration." Presenters Venessa Mendenhall and Tya McGrue of Dare Mighty Things discussed ways to ensure that mentoring program outreach efforts and marketing tools effectively engage families affected by incarceration. Also, they identified resources within communities that can be leveraged for child, parent or caregiver identification and outreach.

A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in the webinar can be found here:

http://www.mentoring.org/ext/MCPCC_news/may09/0509_MCOP_Child_Outreach_Webinar.ppt.

To continue the dialogue, the Caregiver's Choice team has provided answers to the questions received during the Webinar.

Questions Asked by Attendees

Q: Is there an evidence-based practice for mentoring children of prisoners?

A: While there are several regional studies that have been conducted, there has been no large-scale national study on mentoring children with incarcerated parents. [MENTOR's Research in Action](#) series, "[Mentoring: A Promising Intervention for Children of Prisoners](#)," provides a concise summary of the research that has been done in this field so far.

Q: Can the idea about the "nine ways to get involved" be shared via e-mail?

A: During the Webinar, we credited this idea to Lowell Perry, executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee. He urges mentoring programs to include a list of engagement options in every brochure or marketing piece targeting potential volunteers. Options for engagement could include the following:

- Becoming a mentor.
- Identifying 10 people you think would make great mentors.
- Donating goods (such a sports equipment, school supplies, holiday gifts).
- Inviting our mentoring program to give a presentation at your place of business, worship or association.
- Sponsoring a match (donating \$1,000 to support one match for one year).
- Sharing a talent (Web design, marketing, event planning, group facilitation/training, counseling).
- Donating money.

Q: How can we receive credit for attending this Webinar?

A: We do not provide any continuing education or professional credits for attending our Webinars. Attendance at this Webinar was voluntary and was not required for participation in the Caregiver's Choice program.

Q: Does your group provide assistance in finding and recruiting these children?

A: We do! Please contact us at (877) 333-2464 or e-mail us at caregiverschoice@daremightythings.com to get started.

Q: How long will the Caregiver's Choice program be in operation?

A: Caregiver's Choice is a voucher demonstration program, established in 2007 by The Family and Youth Services Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is a three-year program, projected to continue through September 30, 2010, given federal funding availability and support. Continuance after 2010 will depend on legislative priorities and funding.

Q: How can I be put on the mailing list for the Caregiver's Choice newsletter?

A: If your colleagues, other mentoring programs or community agencies would like to receive our monthly newsletters, they may sign up by e-mailing their name, organization's name and e-mail address to caregiverschoice@daremightythings.com or to caregiverschoice@mentoring.org.

Q: What is the best way to help the parent complete the enrollment process? The parent has received a voucher and is interested but is not responding to calls to set up a meeting to continue the process necessary for matching the child.

A: Try calling the caregiver in the evenings or weekends. Leaving voicemails during the business day may not be the most effective way to reach the caregiver. When you do talk to the caregiver, make sure to highlight the benefits both the child and caregiver receive from participating in your program. You may also want to emphasize your screening process and the role the caregiver plays in assuring that the child is matched with an appropriate mentor.

Q: Do mentors have to be U.S. citizens?

A: Your organization should determine the eligibility requirements for your program staff, volunteers, mentees and mentors and document them in your policies and procedures manual. Make sure that the funding you receive does not require citizenship of clients or volunteers. Caregiver's Choice does not require mentors to be U.S. citizens.

Q: How do I go about effectively communicating our mentoring to potential mentors?

A: MENTOR offers a number of resources on mentor recruitment on [their Web site](http://www.mentoring.org). If you have additional questions, feel free to contact us toll-free at (877) 333-2464 or e-mail us at caregiverschoice@daremightythings.com.

Q: How do we assure other organizations that we are not invading certain privacy issues by asking families if they have children of an incarcerated parent? I have been told by certain agencies that they do not feel comfortable asking this question due to privacy issues.

A: Most organizations should feel comfortable asking this question if they feel empowered to explain to the caregiver *why* they are asking about incarceration (i.e., to provide the family with additional services and support). They should always ask for the caregiver's written permission before passing that caregiver's contact information on to any partner organization.

Q: Is there someone there who could help us with the matching process?

A: Caregiver's Choice staff members can help you with any questions you might have about the matching process. Please call our toll-free number (877) 333-2464 or e-mail us at caregiverschoice@daremightythings.com.

Q: Do children whose siblings are incarcerated qualify for the program? If so, what is the proper messaging to identify them?

A: Children whose siblings or relatives (outside of their parent) are incarcerated are *not* eligible for the program. Caregiver's Choice is a program for children with at least one parent incarcerated in a state or federal prison.

Q: How can we partner with state prison facilities? Who is the contact person in each facility?

A: When approaching correctional facilities, ask about their family support services or any efforts made in family reunification. You may be able connect with the program staff of these programs and share with them the services provided by your mentoring program. In addition, prison chaplains may welcome the opportunity to deliver information or to let you speak about your mentoring program.

Q: What are your suggestions for handling the reluctance of families to self-disclose that their family has an incarcerated loved one/significant other?

A: Always explain *why* you are asking about incarceration, and emphasize your confidentiality policies. Make sure they understand that their child will not be disqualified from the program due to the incarceration of the parent.

Q: Do you have any recommendations for addressing the collateral consequences of incarceration on family members with potential mentors?

A: This is an important topic to address in your mentor training. You might want to consider asking a formerly-incarcerated individual, someone with an incarcerated family member, or an employee of the Department of Corrections to speak to potential mentors about how children and families are affected by incarceration. The Urban Institute has published a number of studies on the impact of incarceration on families, including "[Broken Bonds: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents](#)."

Q: How do we find out the number of Caregiver's Choice providers in our area?

A: Please call us at (877) 333-2464 or send an e-mail to caregiverschoice@daremightythings.com, and we are happy to find this information for you.

Q: Can you recommend any documentary-type film or video on children of prisoners?

A: *Troop 1500: Girl Scouts Beyond Bars*. Authors: E. Spiro and K. Bernstein. 2005. Available for a fee from Women Make Movies: www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c659.shtml

Filmmakers spent several years following Girl Scout Troop 1500, whose members were daughters of inmates at Hilltop Prison in Gatesville, Texas. The resulting documentary looks at the girls' lives, their relationships with their mothers and the effects of the Girls Scouts Beyond Bars intervention program.

Visiting Day. Author: *Reading Rainbow*. No date. Available for a fee from GPN Educational Media. <http://www.shopgpn.com/ProductDetail.aspx?Search=Visiting+Day&ProductID=34081>

This episode of *Reading Rainbow* includes a reading of *Visiting Day*, a picture book about a young girl and her grandmother visiting the girl's father in prison. Viewers also are introduced to a real-life family on visiting day.